

Oliver Primary School
Salem, Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-329

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Massachusetts

Historic American Buildings Survey
Frank Chouteau Brown, District Officer
76 Chestnut Street, Boston, Mass.

ADDENDUM TO
OLIVER PRIMARY SCHOOL
Salem
Essex County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MA-329

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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior
P.O. Box 37127
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Addition to:
OLIVER PRIMARY SCHOOL

HABS No. MA-329

Location: Salem, Essex County, Massachusetts.

Significance: Part of an enclave of nineteenth-century educational buildings, the Oliver Primary School building housed educational institutions from 1818 to 1911. This continuous educational service earns it the reputation for being Salem's longest lived school building.

Description: Built of brick from a rectangular plan, the Oliver Primary School is six bays by three bays. It stands two stories tall. The school building is capped by a hip roof. The west (front) facade, three bays wide, is defined by paired Ionic pilasters on the piano nobile. These applied wood pilasters terminate in a frieze and modillioned cornice. The first floor fenestration is articulated by blind arches with rectangular window openings inside them; the second floor has similar arched panels with windows between the pilasters. At the base of each second floor window is a balustrade, whose width equals that of the window, resting on the sandstone belt course. Together the belt course and window balustrades give a horizontal emphasis to the elevation and visually suggest a balcony. Along the Broad Street (north) side, the six bays are delineated by blind arches pierced by rectangular windows, mirroring the west (front) elevation fenestration.

The original configuration of the school building was altered in 1842. Additions to the south side of the building created the present L-shape lay-out. The addition was also a two story edifice with a hipped roof and windows punched into blind arches along the first floor. In 1868-69, the interior was modified. By the late nineteenth century, the west elevation window balustrades were removed. Plus, a Colonial Revival style porch extended across the west face of the addition; the porch posts are square and mimic the Doric order; the porch roofline is accentuated by a balustrade. The front entrance shifted from the west elevation to the Broad Street side of the addition; the previous entry was bricked up.

History: Master builder and Charles Bulfinch disciple, John Milligan designed the structure in 1818-19 to house the Latin School and English High School of Salem. Milligan, a Bostonian, hired artisans Loami Coburn, mason; John Warden and Daniel Bancroft, carpenters; Joseph Newhall, metalworker; and Robert Peele, hardware supplier, to work on the building. Shortly thereafter, the State Normal School building was constructed next door. In 1855-56, a new high school, the Classical and High School, was constructed on the other side of the Latin School building. At that time, the Oliver Primary School moved into the Latin and High School structure designed by Milligan. The Primary School operated inside this building until 1911.

The rectangular plan changed in 1842. Interior changes, according to George C. Lord and George A. Fuller plans, were made in 1868-69. Today, the building is a residence.

Sources: Cassie, Alexander, "National Register Nomination: Chestnut Street District," National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1971.

Historic Buildings of Massachusetts. edited by John C. Poppeliers. Scribner Historic Building Series. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976. Photographic catalogue of historic buildings, built primarily during the colonial and federal periods.